

**LODI CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CARNEGIE FORUM, 305 WEST PINE STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2000**

A. ROLL CALL

The Special City Council meeting of August 8, 2000 was called to order by Mayor Mann at 7:03 a.m.

Present: Council Members – Hitchcock, Nakanishi, Pennino and Mayor Mann (left at 8:33 a.m.)

Absent: Council Members – Land

Also Present: City Manager Flynn, City Attorney Hays and City Clerk Blackston

The City Clerk reviewed the weekly calendar.

B. REGULAR CALENDAR

B-1 “Proposed Parks and Recreation Department Reorganization”

Council Member Hitchcock expressed concern that the meeting was scheduled as a Special City Council meeting rather than an informational Shirtsleeve Session. She felt that the early hour limited public participation and hoped that no action would be taken today, and that the issue would be carried over to a Regular Council meeting.

City Manager Flynn explained that the reason for the meeting today is to get direction from the Council on whether to move forward on the proposed Parks and Recreation Department reorganization. If so, the next step would be to bring the matter back to the Council at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Council Member Hitchcock countered that the Council has provided direction to staff at Shirtsleeve Sessions before, and noted that a vote is not required to build consensus.

Council Member Pennino was in favor of hearing the staff report.

Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi concurred with Council Member Hitchcock, agreeing that no formal decision should be made at this morning's meeting.

City Manager Flynn reminded the Council that he was asked at a previous Council meeting to look at the feasibility of reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department and report back with a recommendation. He pointed out that he has had to delay hiring a new Parks and Recreation Director pending direction from the Council on this issue.

Mr. Flynn reported that in a survey of other California cities he could not find any where the Community Center is separate from the Parks and Recreation Department. He noted that Community Center Director Charlene Lange has exceptional fundraising and management skills, which could be utilized in the Parks and Recreation Department for raising additional funds for the indoor sports facility and other projects. Mr. Flynn stated that input has been solicited from associated commissions and committees. He reported that representatives from Hutchins Street Square were in favor of the proposed reorganization of Parks and Recreation, while representatives from Parks and Recreation were opposed to it. The perception of the community is that Hutchins Street Square and the Parks and Recreation Department have two separate value systems. He asked the Council for direction on whether Bob Overstreet should be hired as a consultant, and Jack Harrison as the Interim Parks and Recreation Director.

Parks and Recreation Director Williamson informed the Council that his department is understaffed, noting that his full time staff has been decreased from 36 to 27. In addition, the department is maintaining more property, handling its own projects, and has made many enhancements to its programs. He expressed concern in separating “host maintenance” from “general maintenance”, explaining that often times these crews are needed to work together. In summary, Mr. Williamson stated that he was in favor of reorganizing the department only if it would bring better quality programs and service to the community. He warned that by adding a Director and Division Managers to the Department it would increase costs.

Mayor Mann supported Mr. Flynn's decision to bring to the Council the option of hiring a consultant during the interim period, while studying the possibility of reorganizing the Department and recruiting for a replacement for retiring Director Williamson. Mayor Mann announced that he would not make a decision on separating divisions of the Parks and Recreation Department until adequate study has been done and public input is sought. He indicated that he did not believe it was the intention of the Council to make a final decision on this issue today.

In response to Council Member Hitchcock, Mr. Flynn reported that a recommendation regarding the proposed reorganization is scheduled to be brought back to the Council in mid-November.

With the aid of an overhead (filed), Public Works Director Prima reported on the common areas of responsibility between Parks Maintenance and Public Works. He stated that since 1998, the Public Works Department has put out to bid 15 street projects, 11 parks projects, and 6 others. His greatest concern with the reorganization proposal is that more work may be added to Public Works without additional staff. Mr. Prima stated that he spoke with a public works director in another city who had been through a reorganization wherein Parks Maintenance was placed under Public Works. The director stated that the Parks employees saw it as an advantage to work in an organization focused on maintenance.

Council Member Hitchcock expressed her opinion that Parks maintenance workers should be paid the same as Public Works maintenance personnel.

Mr. Prima replied that Public Works maintenance employees are required to have a Class A Driver's License and thus should be compensated at a higher rate.

Mr. Flynn agreed that the Parks and Recreation Department is understaffed and noted that he hopes to bring the issue back to the Council with a recommendation in the Fall.

Community Center Director Lange stated that Hutchins Street Square exists in large part due to support from the Parks and Recreation Department and other groups. She reported that the Community Center has taken over some of the leisure services that the Parks and Recreation Department either did not have the skills or time to manage; such as, the Lodi Arts Commission, Lodi Community Band, and the Youth Commission. As evidence of her qualifications, she noted that she has a degree in agriculture and views herself as a cheerleader, organizer, and manager.

Bob Overstreet reported that he has 35 years experience in the Parks and Recreation and Community Services field. For the past 10 years he has been a consultant to cities, counties and special districts. He has performed reorganization reviews for the cities of Sacramento, San Jose, Salinas, Ventura, Redwood City, and others. Mr. Overstreet emphasized the importance of trust and communication between internal customers, stakeholders, and the general public.

Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi commented that with the impending retirement of the Parks and Recreation Director, this is not an opportune time to make drastic changes to the Department. He felt that the reorganization issue should be studied over a long period of time.

Jack Harrison described his background which includes over 30 years in Parks and Recreation. For the past eight years, he has been the sole proprietor of Harrison and Associates Parks Management Consultants. Mr. Harrison stated that if hired, his role would be to provide interim management and leadership to the Parks and Recreation Department while the City recruits for a permanent Director. During this period he would represent staff of the Department, and could bring in "best practices" from around the state for consideration.

City Manager Flynn asked the Council for direction on whether to move forward on hiring a consultant and an interim Parks and Recreation Director.

Council Member Pennino stated that discussions regarding merging the two departments have been ongoing for ten years. He explained that he had asked in June for this issue to be brought forward due to the impending retirement of Mr. Williamson. He noted that Ms. Lange may retire within two to five years as well, and it would be important to hire a Parks and Recreation Director that also had qualifications to manage a Community Center and conduct fundraising efforts. He expressed support for Mr. Flynn's recommendation to hire a consultant and an interim Director.

Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi did not recall discussing the issue of reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department at any previous Shirtsleeve or Regular Council meeting. He supported moving forward with finding a replacement for the Parks and Recreation Director, but reiterated that the reorganization issue should be further studied and considered at a later time.

Council Member Hitchcock felt that there would be less efficiency by combining departments. She disagreed with Mr. Flynn's assertion that Lodi is the only city that separates their Community Center from Parks and Recreation. She spoke in favor of decentralization, stating that the more people who are empowered to be in charge, the more effective the organization is, which in turn increases community approval. Creating another layer of government will have a greater cost. She expressed support for hiring a permanent Parks and Recreation Director.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- a) Frank Alegre, 2000 Edgewood Drive, Lodi, commended Ron Williamson for managing an excellent Parks and Recreation Department. He spoke in opposition of reorganizing the Department. Mr. Alegre expressed concern that if the Community Center was combined with Parks and Recreation, the fundraising efforts of organizations such as BOBS would have money siphoned off to go toward Hutchins Street Square. He questioned what the priorities would be if the departments were combined. He complained that his previous requests to receive financial documents from Hutchins Street Square have gone unanswered.

NOTE: Mayor Mann left at 8:33 a.m.

- b) Bob Askloff, 1107 Lake Home Drive, Lodi, submitted a list of questions to the Council (filed) and concurred with Council Member Hitchcock's comments. He strongly opposed the concept of reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department and stated that the Council should be ashamed that they have reduced the Department's staffing.
- c) Patty Steward, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Commission, 803 Tilden Drive, Lodi, urged the Council to study the issue completely before making a decision. She indicated that the proposed reorganization would require a considerable increase in management positions. Ms. Stewart emphasized the importance of obtaining input from the community.
- d) John Johnson, speaking on behalf of the Lodi Sports Foundation, expressed his opposition to reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department and urged the Council to vote against the proposal. He commented that at a meeting he had attended on this issue, the City Manager stated that there would not be a cost savings in terms of personnel, and in fact, this proposal would cost the City more money.

Continued August 8, 2000

MOTION:

The City Council, on motion of Council Member Hitchcock, Nakanishi second, voted to drop consideration of reorganizing the Parks and Recreation Department and to move forward with hiring a permanent Parks and Recreation Director. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Council Members - Hitchcock and Nakanishi

Noes: Council Members – Pennino

Absent: Council Members – Land and Mann (Mayor)

C. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

D. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

ATTEST:

Susan J. Blackston
City Clerk